

Making the Education Community of Interest Relevant

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In May 2014 I replaced Mr. Jeff Bearor as the Executive Deputy for Training and Education Command and the lead for the Education Community of Interest (COI). I have been reading a lot of material about the 1700 community and the COI. I would like to offer some initial thoughts and solicit your support.

As I learn more about the Education COI, it has become apparent to me that the roles, responsibilities, and functionalities of the COI need to be better defined. COI members need to know what the COI is and is not, and what it can do for them and what it cannot. Some of the documents written when the COI was established articulate a vision in which the COI essentially performs many of the same functions as the monitors at Manpower & Reserve Affairs do for Marines. Many aspects of that vision have not been implemented for a variety of reasons. I think one of the main reasons is that local commanders hire individuals with specific skill sets for particular positions and manage their employees. Individual employees make the decision to remain in their current positions or seek advancement opportunities. The Education COI can assist employees in some areas, but there is a limit to what can be done because the support infrastructure consists of a two person office- Jim Hilton and Terra Eidinger. And resources available for training and education opportunities and providing services that would enhance employees' competencies and make them more competitive in their field are very constrained in today's fiscal environment.

My review of current Education COI activities revealed several good initiatives by the COI office. A monthly newsletter facilitates exchange of best practices among COI members and provides useful information. I do not know how many members read it on a regular basis but I recommend it to you as it provides good insights from experts in various fields. And I hope it motivates other members to contribute articles. The COI acquired and mailed out or hand delivered various books on training and education to members who requested them. Over the past six few months or so, the enterprise COI program conducted a pilot program to test COI program member access to online courses hosted on MarineNet. The courses were generic but your Education COI had the highest number of employees participate of the 19 COIs in the Marine Corps. Thank you for contributing to the pilot program effort.

I want to make the make the COI value added to the 1700 community. To that end, I need your help. I am re-energizing the executive steering committee (ESC) to develop a pragmatic way ahead. I have reached out to some senior members in each series asking them to participate and many responded quickly to say they would be ESC members. My goal is to have at least one representative for each series, and hopefully more for those with larger populations, that will interact with members of their respective series to solicit input, craft recommendations, and assist with implementation.

I would like to share some thoughts on some initial steps. The ESC will be critical to developing a pragmatic way ahead. To do that the ESC members will need your input. It seems to me that having each series review its competencies to ensure they are still valid is a good starting point. It will help us in our search for relevant online and resident training/education opportunities to help COI members improve their technical skills in appropriate competencies. The Education COI website needs to be updated. Combined with the newsletter, it can be a very useful tool for members to leverage as they seek to enhance their skills and increase their competitiveness for future opportunities.

More to follow in the coming months as the ESC gets going and engages the different series within the community. Please keep in mind that the Education COI is focused on improving the technical skills of its members and facilitating the exchange of ideas; it cannot do it without your participation.